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TRAINING AND RESEARCH: UNITED NATIONS INSTITUTE FOR TRAINING AND RESEARCH

Report of the Secretary-General

1. At its fiftieth session, the General Assembly considered matters pertaining to the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR). In adopting resolution 50/121, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General duly taking into account the deliberations of the Board of Trustees, to submit a report to the General Assembly at its fifty-first session on possible ways to strengthen the training activities of the United Nations Institute for Training and Research and to better define its role. This report is submitted in response to that request.

2. The Secretary-General wishes to recall his often expressed view that training represents a valuable investment in the future of the Organization. This applies to programmes geared to meeting the training requirements of Member States, as well as to those of United Nations system staff, which also ultimately aim at responding to Member States' needs by enhancing the capacity of the system to meet effectively the evolving demands of the membership. With these considerations in mind, and taking into account the invitation to UNITAR contained in General Assembly resolution 50/121 to "further develop its cooperation with United Nations institutes and other national, regional and international institutes", the Secretary-General's response to this resolution has focused in the past several months on identifying, and building on, commonalities of need and approach in the delivery of training programmes for Member States as well as United Nations staff that would serve to enhance their coordination and meet overall requirements in the most cost-effective way possible.

3. In this regard, the Secretary-General has ensured that the United Nations Staff College (UNSC) project is a system-wide venture, developed with intensive input from United Nations system organizations and a number of Member States. The project has received the support of the Executive Heads of the United

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Nations system of organizations in the context of the Administrative Committee on Coordination and its CCAQ's subsidiary body on system-wide training activities. The Secretary-General envisages that the training activities of both UNITAR and the United Nations system-wide Staff College project would benefit from association, in terms of yielding mutual benefits in strengthening and rationalizing respective curriculum development in areas and disciplines of shared interest and activity. Such association would also enhance the cost-effectiveness of programme development and delivery, and have the added benefit of avoiding "donor fatigue" when approaching contributing governmental and non-governmental organizations. In this regard, it is noted that the United Nations Staff College project is funded in its entirety by extrabudgetary resources. Moreover, joint training and learning opportunities for government representatives and United Nations system staff will go far in building operational partnerships for more effective action in areas of shared concern. Programme content would reflect matters of shared interest, while adjusting to meet the specific needs of respective target programme participants. Designed with these goals in mind, joint training and learning opportunities for government representatives and United Nations system staff in areas of common interest can only contribute to enhancing overall operational effectiveness and responsiveness.

4. In its report entitled "Feasibility study on the relocation of UNITAR to the Turin Centre", the Joint Inspection Unit notes, inter alia, that "there is a general consensus on the need to find concrete and implementable ways to coordinate the United Nations system training activities in order to use resources more rationally, avoid duplication and overlap, and consolidate activities to the extent possible. There also appears to be general agreement to tackle this question in a comprehensive manner and not to follow a piecemeal approach. The Secretary-General's efforts to find a comprehensive and lasting solution for a better coordination and a potential regrouping of the United Nations system training activities is a key element in this regard. Therefore, the United Nations Staff College Project (UNSCP) should be regarded as part of these efforts". 1/

5. To this end, the Secretary-General has actively pursued over the past year all possible avenues for increased cooperation between UNITAR and UNSC, including participation by UNITAR in UNSC curriculum development workshops. Priority areas identified for such cooperation include: peacekeeping and peacemaking; the provision of humanitarian assistance and management of complex emergencies; and the management of development activities. The Secretary-General notes with appreciation the recognition of the UNITAR Board of Trustees of the importance of this initiative and its instruction to its Acting Executive Director "to strengthen cooperation with the Turin Centre and with the Staff College project, taking into account present resources and activities ..." 2/

6. At a time when resources are scarce and the system is increasingly called upon to assume new or different tasks in response to the evolving needs of the Member States, it is important that optimal use is made of all available resources and facilities. Moreover, it is considered that the United Nations Staff College project offers the opportunity to take optimum advantage of the system-wide capacities and facilities available at the ILO Training Centre in Turin, in strengthening United Nations system capacity in bringing together

governmental, non-governmental and United Nations system partners in effective training and learning opportunities.

Notes

1/ JIU/REP/96/6.

2/ Conclusions and recommendations of the Special Session of the Board of Trustees, United Nations Institute for Training and Research, Geneva, 2-4 September 1996, para. 16 (e).